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THE CEA CRITIC

Vol. No. XIX—No. 2—Published at Springfield, Mass. Editorial Office, University of Mass., Amherst, Mass. February, 1957

National Meeting 1957

The annual meeting of CEA will be held at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, on Sept. 10, 1957, in connection with the MLA convention. The program will have as its theme the state of the profession. The speaker will be Dr. William Riley Parker, former executive secretary of the Modern Language Association, and now professor of English at the University of Indiana.

Prof. Ralph M. Aderman of the Univ. of Wisconsin at Milwaukee will be the local chairman of CEA. Prof. Carl R. Woodring of the Univ. of Wisconsin is serving as liaison officer between the MLA local committee and CEA.

Committee on International English Studies

Progress Report

The CEA Committee on International English Studies wishes to report that a modest beginning has been made to forward the Association's interest in this area. It has consisted in trying to define the nature of our opportunities through discussion with members of the State Department and USIA, correspondence with colleagues currently abroad, and correspondence with CEA members at home.

As a result, two major professional interests seem to be developing:

1. The role of English as an international language. This is relatively complex. But it has two general aspects: a. The teaching of American English abroad by American instructors with American techniques. A great deal of work has already been done here through government agencies. b. The teaching of English abroad by native instructors with techniques reflecting local cultural backgrounds. This I call International English (English as a foreign language is an awkward phrase with chauvinistic connotations). It has many specialized objectives that inevitably make it different from American English.

2. The role of American and British culture abroad as reflected in the literature written in the English language. This also has two general aspects: a. The interpretation of our culture abroad by American scholars. Many foreign students realize

(*Please turn to page* 2)

On-Going Concerns Of The CEA

Committee of Board

A Committee on Ongoing Concerns, chaired by Carl Lefevre, has reported to the Board on a study of the principal concerns expressed by members. On the basis of this report and a discussion at the Officers and Directors meeting in Amherst in July, continued in Washington at Christmas, the following resolution has been adopted by the Board of Directors:

CEA, an organization, has a primary concern with the status of the profession. Specific concerns include 1. Recruitment of able people into profession of college English teaching. 2. Strengthening humanistic emphasis in teaching language and litterature. 3. Reassessing and redirecting M.A. and Ph.D. programs for teacher training for validity and relevance. 4. Improving conditions of teaching; increasing rewards, both financial and in prestige and recognition. 5. Contributing to planning for meeting the tidal wave of students; resisting unacceptable proposals by positive alternatives.

As a means of positive action on these concerns, the Officers and Directors of the College English Association have voted to constitute themselves a committee of the whole to define professional standards and conditions for the teaching of English language and literature.

Among specific concerns to be delegated to subcommittees are the following:

(a) Essential qualifications for acceptance in the profession, for service in the classroom, for acceptance for and completion of professional training.

(b) Development of standards for teaching conditions, including 1. Hourly teaching loads and size of classes, 2. Curriculum for English major, 3. Departmental structure: Rank structure; Sub-instructorial staff — percentage, nature and degree of teaching supervision, 4. Professional salary scale commensurate with that for comparable ability, preparation, and experience in other divisions, departments and professional schools.

(c) Publicizing committee findings and recommendations widely within profession and to nation at large.

(d) Co-operation with accrediting agencies in gaining acceptance of and insistence upon minimum standards in all of these areas.

The Structural Approach To The English Language

Language is a system. We speak it and hear it all of a piece and all at once. A child is born into it and masters it by a tutelage that mingles encouragement with punishment. Encouragement is given to perfect its idiom and tune; punishment is given for deviations from custom and tone. "Thank you," for example, is drilled into the child until the utterance is enunciated in proper sounds and with appropriate intonation.

This system has something less than 800 structure points. By the age of six a child has command over the phonemic system of 9 vowels, 3 semivowels, 21 consonants, 4 levels of pitch, 4 levels of stress, and 4 kinds of pauses (or junctures). These 45 basic units are accompanied by an overlay of facial expressions, body movements, and vocal qualifiers such as overloudness, whispering, and rasping. There are about 300 form changes: 100 endings and 200 irregular forms (strong verbs, noun plurals, etc.). The 300 structure words include determiners (articles), auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and other classes that form the operating machinery of the language. And finally there are about 150 syntactic signals of word order.

A child of six is in command of many — —not all — of these structure points. It adds new vocabulary and adapts these new items to its system. Thus newly acquired irregular verbs may fall into the regular pattern, as in "I **buyed** a candy bar" or "I **catched** the ball." The child operates within its habit grooves. Any deviation from standard usage results from inexperience. In its own way the child is an expert user of speech.

The language tasks of the school on admitting a child are fivefold:

1. The school must increase the child's awareness of, and competence in using, all the necessary structures in speaking and auding (hearing and responding to speech signals).

2. The school must enlarge the child's vocabulary and show how the new words

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THE CEA CRITIC

Official Organ of the College English Assoc. Inc.
Published at 38 Hampden St., Springfield, Mass.
Editor: Maxwell H. Goldberg
Managing Editor: Lee E. Holt
Consulting Editor: Robert T. Fitzhugh
Published Monthly, September through May

College English Association
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Associate Member, American Council on Education
(Address contributions and correspondence to the Managing Editor, c/o College English Association, South College, Univ. of Mass., Amherst, Mass.)
Annual Subscription, $2.00
Re-entered as second-class matter Oct. 2, 1954, at the Post Office, Springfield, Mass., under the Act of August 24, 1912.
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EXPOSITION AND PERSUASION
By R. D. BROWN and DAVID G. SPENCER
Unique in its field, this text is designed primarily for those students majoring in technical and "non-literary" fields. It is a collection of expository essays that appeals to the practical needs of such students for an understanding of techniques, while holding their attention with readings that widen their viewpoints beyond the field of technology. Pertinent questions follow each essay.
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The Advantage Would Be Great

English in its spoken form offers no doubt an excellent vocabulary to choose from one to two thousand words to express our thoughts. This small vocabulary is one of the reasons English is spoken all over the world. In fact Basic English consists of only 850 words. The vocabulary is concise and expressive; the declension of pronouns, the comparison of adjectives and adverbs and above all, the easy system of conjugation make English the most accepted second language.

When we present English in spoken form, our students are enthusiastic. But when, as in the instance of number "one," the pronunciation varies to "wun," they ask us a whole lot of questions. They ask us not to "kid" them. They say that Americans and English are intelligent, energetic, and above all practical people, for whom it is impossible to waste so much time and energy in useless and silent words or syllables or arbitrary pronunciations.

In this age of atomic energy, supersonic communications, television, radio, radar, with plans to communicate with the celestial bodies, science has developed so much that there is now no question of impossibility. We **must** discuss the question: "Can written English be adapted to discontinue the need of a second language, that is, a phonetic key for every word?"

Supersonic communications and transportations require that we confront this situation. In a crisis, such as a war, Peru and all the Latin American countries will be allied to the United States, and it will be wise to spend some time and money to avoid the present and only difficulty of the English language. Its orthography should be converted into a simple and direct form to be pronounced as such.

The advantage would be great, as time and money as well as intellectual energy could be saved.

What suggestions would you be kind to give? Should this suggestion be overlooked?

Ricardo Tello Devotto
Huancayo, Peru, S. A.

International English

(*Continued from page* 1)

that an elementary grasp of the language can give them a tool adequate for commercial purposes or for gaining access to factual knowledge. But a command of the language to them means an ability to read literature. (When the facts are all in on this we may be able to enrich the government programs. Many foreign students hold literature in higher esteem than some Americans).

b. A third step in sophistication appears with the interpretation of American and British literature by foreign scholars. We are accustomed to this from certain European scholars — French, German, etc. — whose cultures are closely related to our own. But scholarship from cultures more remote from our own — Eastern European or Asian for example — is also in existence. This has some valuable contributions to our own knowledge and our own professional discipline.

These might be described as long range objectives. There are also three practical and short range accomplishments to report:

1. Mr. Hancock of the World Publishing Company has offered to give us "hurt" copies of the **Webster New World Dictionary** to send abroad if we can raise the shipping charges. I have already sent 20 to Japan to be distributed through the secretary of the American Literature Society of that country.

2. The Asia Foundation has expressed an interest in supplying some money for our program.

3. The 1956 program for the National CEA meeting that has been arranged through the good offices of president-nominate, Professor Harry Warfel.

Respectfully submitted,
James P. McCormick, Chairman
Wayne State University

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The Case For Abolishing Freshman Composition

Most American colleges and universities depend heavily upon a semester, or, more commonly, upon a year course in composition to train students to write competently. With due regard to variations, the content of this course might be summarized as follows: the students write from ten to fifteen themes each term; they are assigned a similar number of essays from a book of readings, upon which their themes may or may not be based; they are exposed to varying amounts of formal grammar; they are given a rather thorough workout in the mechanics of writing, especially punctuation and spelling; and they probably get some training in the rudiments of rhetoric.

Now it may well be one of the many great ironies of modern pedagogy that this traditional freshman composition course does not provide the most efficient means for teaching college students to write. This suggestion is startling to say the least, but there appears to be considerable evidence to indicate that it cannot be ignored.

If at the end of the term we composition teachers were to make an honest examination of the performance of our students we would very likely find that only a small percentage—say ten per cent— of them have shown a dramatic improvement in their writing ability. Another fifteen or twenty per cent might show a noticeable improvement. But we would probably be obliged to conclude that the remaining seventy per cent were writing no better— and a few probably even worse— at the end of the term than at the beginning.

False Principles

The reason that the writing of most freshmen improves so little in composition courses appears to be due in part to two widely practiced but largely fallacious principles: first, that students can learn to write merely by writing and correcting what they have written; and second, that if a student can conquer all the errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical aspects of composition, he will somehow be able to write competently.

The notion that students can learn to write merely by writing appears to ignore the phenomenon that a writer learns his art chiefly by imitation, that is, by first seeing how experts write and then by doing some writing himself. By imitation I mean here not close stylistic imitation of a sample of good writing, but rather an unconscious imitation of rhetorical and stylistic techniques of authors whom the writer has previously read. The actual process of writing is a mysterious thing indeed and no one perhaps really knows how a writer forms his thoughts into words. But one thing is certain: he does not form them out of a vacuum. It seems highly likely that a good writer first learns the value and use of rhetoric by observing how writers used it with great effectiveness. In other words, the way anyone best learns to write, including college freshmen, is not merely by writing, but by reading — and reading copiously.

By the same token, mechanical correctness cannot be said to lead automatically to good writing. There is too strong a tendency in freshman English courses to stress the negative aspects of composition. The goal of many of them seems to be to teach the student not to misspell words, not to misuse commas, not to write dangling modifiers, comma splices, or sentence fragments and not to violate the rules of grammar. The implication is that if the student can avoid these pitfalls he will somehow become a competent writer. But chances are that he will not. Good writing is not merely a negative process in which errors in mechanics and syntax are carefully avoided; it is an intensely positive process in which the writer is challenged to exploit the language to its furthermost limits in order to convey his ideas in the most effective way possible. And it is chiefly by extensive reading that he learns to do so.

Learn by Reading

The close relationship between reading and writing is most obvious in the process by which a writer masters English idiom. It is a process which he learns chiefly from other writers. Neither an instructor nor a handbook can be of much help. The instructor may of course point out to the student his errors in idiom, and the student may correct them; but as soon as the ininstructor's back is turned, the unread freshman will violate the idiom of the language in any of 50,000 ways, simply because there are few rules or helpful hints governing it.

If it is true that students can learn to write only after considerable reading, it would appear that laboratory and workbook methods by themselves are of questionable effectiveness. Such courses epitomize the negative approach to writing. Furthermore, the current emphasis upon learning to write merely by writing has brought about college courses in business writing, scientific writing, agricultural writing, and goodness knows what other kinds of writing. These courses are largely remedial courses in disguise. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as scientific, business, or agricultural writing; there is only writing. If prospective businessmen and scientists and agriculturalists can write, they can write letters and articles without having to take special courses that enable them to do so. Universities offer these courses chiefly because the students, despite their freshman composition training, have still not learned to write.

Literature Course with Writing

In short, we apparently offer every imaginable kind of writing course except the one which most effectively teaches the student to write — the one which requires him to read voluminously.

But most students who fail to improve their writing in their composition courses also fail to learn anything else of any consequence. The knowledge that they may pick up from the essays in their reader is generally miscellaneous and slight — and what is worse, not readily retained, for they know that in the end their grade in composition depends chiefly upon their knowledge of what any of the authors of the essays in their readers said about any-

(*Please turn to page 4*)

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Abolishing Freshman English

(*Continued from page* 3)

thing.

With all this emphasis which I have been placing upon the close relationship between reading and writing, what I am suggesting is not a composition course in which the students do a great deal of reading. Rather I am suggesting a literature course in which they do a great deal of writing; for under a carefully planned literature program not only would freshmen have the opportunity to learn systematically and rather thoroughly an important body of literature, but in the end they would be better writers than if their writing experiences were confined to theme assignments in freshman composition courses. The ideal program would be a two year course in literature with readings carefully grouped and graded in degree of difficulty—and more important, taught with attention to such matters as organization rhetoric, and diction. Thus, a student having experienced two years of wide reading would be almost assured of a considerable acquaintance with the English language, such as the equivalent time in composition courses could not possibly assure him.

Say Something!

In the long run, perhaps one of the most important advantages of such a program is a psychological one. If, instead of writing about his cows or his teachers, the freshman student could write papers interpreting or commenting upon the short stories, poems, essays, plays, or novels which he has been reading and if he knew that he was to be graded upon his success in doing so, he would more readily learn and appreciate that the main purpose of writing is not to get good grades but to say something and to convince his readers that what he is saying is true.

Now no one is so naive as to suppose that any student can master the fundamentals of English merely by wide reading, nor can anyone deny that a knowledge of them is important. But the problem could be approached in a number of ways. Instructors could of course continue to point out errors in their students' papers and grade them on mechanics as well as on content. More important, the student himself could be brought to do a little work if he were tested at length on the contents of a good handbook or required to pass a proficiency examination in English before graduating. Students particularly deficient in English fundamentals could also be given extra hours of class time. Other devices will likewise suggest themselves.

Some English instructors will perhaps readily agree that for the above-average student this program may have something to recommend it. In fact, in a number of colleges and universities freshman English programs are right now being carried on in which one of the main aims is to introduce the student to the chief literary types. And there are a precious few colleges and universities in which freshman composition has been entirely replaced by literature courses or where it has never been offered. Most of these freshman programs are restricted to students who already know how to write fairly well. But my point is that the average and to a large degree even the below-average student will learn to write better under a program such as I am suggesting than he will under the traditional composition course.

Everything to Gain

The college or university with the daring and the willingness to gamble on introducing such a program as I have proposed stands to lose very little. For even though there is the bare possibility that some seventy per cent of the students may emerge from it still rather inept with a pen, the percentage would be no higher than it is now in conventional composition courses. The only difference might be that under the program I propose, the students would have acquired a fairly extensive knowledge of literature and all the intellectual advantages that accrue to that knowledge. The odds are good, however, that the average student under a literature program will be a far more effective writer than his less fortunate brother who in his composition course got nothing more for his pains than a knowledge of a few rules for using the comma and a vague recollection that somebody named Whitehead or Blackhead maintained that science and religion either are or are not compatible.

If there is any truth at all in the foregoing observations, then the conventional freshman composition program ought to come up for some serious scrutiny. This is particularly true in colleges which do not require students to take literature courses, and where the distinction between the first and second required composition course is so slight as to be embarrassing to the department and boring to the students.

Meanwhile, even though there may be a shortage of English instructors in the years to come, there is not likely to be a shortage of books; and it is perhaps time that we began to teach freshmen to write by an easier and pleasanter—and more effective—means.

Arthur S. Trace, Jr.
John Carroll University

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Preliminary Program Of The Cleveland Institute Of The Humanities Center

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Thursday April 18

12:15

Keynote Luncheon (Hotel Carter) Open to all Institute participants and to as many as 1,000 invited teachers and businessmen from the Cleveland area.

Human Values in the Age of Automation: keynote addresses by an academic speaker, an industrial speaker, and an editorial speaker.

First Institute General Session (Hotel Carter).

3:15

The CEA and Human Values: a resume and revaluation; panel session representing labor, management, and the academics.

6:15

Host Dinner (Chamber of Commerce Building)

The New Society: major address.

9:00

First Discussion Series (Hotel Carter)

The Challenge to Liberal Education in the Age of Automation: choice of interest areas.

The Changing Functions of Labor;

The Changing Functions of Management;

The Challenge of Corporate Citizenship in the Community:

The Challenge of International Industrial Statesmanship;

The Responsibilities of Public Administration in the Age of Automation;

The Challenge of Increased Leisure Time;

The Challenge of the Retired Worker;

The Challenge to Individualism;

Ethical Tensions of the Age of Automation;

The challenge to Closed Systems of Thought and Action;

The Criterion of Adaptability

10:15

Second Discussion Series (Hotel Carter)

The Challenge to Liberal Education in the Age of Automation: Part II.

1:00

Second General Session (Hotel Carter): showing of Ford film

1:40

Board busses for trip through automation plant.

2:15-4:15

Plant Tour: Ford Engine Plant

Automatic Controls in Industry: major address.

Saturday April 20

9:00

Third General Session (Hotel Carter). Panel discussion of **The Challenge of Automation to Higher Education**

The Challenge to Educational policy.

The Challenge to the Undergraduate College

The Challenge to Adult Education

10:15

Third Discussion Series (Hotel Carter)

Human Values in the College and University: How Can Education Meet Its Changing Responsibilities and Challenges?

12:00

Luncheon (Hotel Carter) honoring the Standard Oil Company of Ohio, general sponsor of the Institute.

The Way Ahead: major address by industrial speaker

Summary Address by academic speaker

2:30

Institute ends

Industrial Sponsor of the Institute: The Standard Oil Company (Ohio).

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Host, plant tour and Friday evening program: The Ford Motor Company.

Co-ordinator of industrial participation: The Cleveland Chamber of Commerce.

Developmental Committee: Maxwell H. Goldberg, Box 472, Amherst, Massachusetts, Executive Director, The Humanities Center; John Ball, 205 Administration Building, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. Coordinator of the Institute; Kenneth Nash, Cleveland Chamber of Commerce Building, Cleveland, Ohio, Coordinator of industrial participation; Donald Tuttle, Professor of English, Fenn College, Cleveland, Ohio. Chairman of Local Arrangements; George E. Grauel, Head, Department of English, John Carroll University, Cleveland 18, Ohio; Harlan Hamilton, Professor of English, Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio; Major Jenks, Dean, School of Arts and Sciences, Fenn College; Donald Koch, Department of English, Baldwin-Wallace College; Carolyn Neff, Executive Assistant to the President, Western Reserve University; John Patrick Rooney, Jr., Assistant to the President, John Carroll University.

TEACHING PARADOX

Yeats went hunting
and found a pair of ducks.
Brooks went foxing
and found a paradox.
Poets go fishing
and find fish in brooks.
We go teaching
and find brooks in books.

Long Beach State College
Richard E. Lee

A new magazine of creative literature, **The Colorado,** issued its Vol. I No. 1, Winter of 1956-57, on the faith of its editors, John W. Lewis and Jay Pell, that "there is an intelligent faction of relatively large size among the reading public, which wants and is willing to read fresh literary work."

The first issue has poems by E. E. Cummings, William Carlos Williams, and others; stories by Mark Van Doren, Henry Miller and others; and an Eric Bentley translation of Bertolt Brecht's play "Die Massnahme." Subscription price is $2.75 a year, sent to 85 Circle Drive, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Copies of Carl Lefevre's "Report of the committee on on-going CEA concerns" are available to those who would like to study it. Write to Al Madeira, Box 472, Amherst, Mass.

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THE PARAGON COMPLEX

The supreme novelist of all time is Thomas Wolfe. The greatest American poet is Wallace Stevens. The most significant influence upon the development of British drama is Beaumont and Fletcher. Katherine Mansfield is unquestionably the finest short story writer in our language. No writer possesses more sensitivity and power than Frederico Garcia Lorca. Laurence Sterne brought the novel to heights unequalled before or since. The outstanding poet of the past three centuries is William Butler Yeats. Contrariwise Dylan Thomas is the outstanding poet of the past three centuries.

How do I know all this? Very simply: I have been reading a number of recent M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations. Picking up more of them, I discover that Emily Dickinson is the acutest woman poet of history; that Gerard Manley Hopkins has no peer within the past several centuries; that Virginia Woolf is the most valuable novelist of our time; that James Joyce is the most valuable novelist of all time; and that the supreme thinker of the modern world is John Henry Newman. Continuing with the theses and dissertations, I learn that W. C. Williams possesses more insight into the modern condition than any other contemporary; that George Santayana hit closer to the nub than any other philosopher; that John Steinbeck reveals more knowledge of modern life than etc., etc.

One other thing is sure: if anyone doubts or disputes these judgments, then he stands self-condemned as ignorant, uninformed, and naked to laughter. Such a one is unalert, a dull fellow. He has read little and understood less. He is—to be cruel but true—**insensitive.**

We are all acquainted with the phenomenon of self-identification. Abuse my nation and you abuse me: my ego is involved. Dispraise my love and you dispraise me: my heart is involved. Doubt my author and you doubt me: my learning, my taste, my life are all involved. Moreover, since the ego is involved, then nation, love, and author become as precious to us as ourselves; indeed become ourselves. Suppose that I am writing a thesis about Thomas Wolfe; I have selected him; I devote weeks of my time and thought to him; I like him —he is important, otherwise see how I waste my time and how I misjudge talent. He is extremely important, for now he shares my labor, my moods, my self. This is the logic that leads to the Paragon Complex.

The Paragon Complex can be defined as the conviction and assertion (generally by young scholars) that the subject of their research is of supreme quality, both in itself and in comparison with others of the same type. The Paragon Complex deals with superlatives. It is intolerant and positive. It is near-sighted and stubborn. It avoids proportion and perspective. It inclines to be superciliously amused at those with other opinions. It is Love of Self identified with Love of a Subject.

The Paragon Complex among young graduates is understandable. There is a need to assure themselves that their work is significant and that the dedication of their time and effort to such-and-such a writer is a worthy devotion. It is certain that their subject has some real value, for it has some reputation—small or considerable—in the academic world at large. To fall into the soggy conviction that the person, work, or era is exceedingly important is only natural. Else what a loss of time and thought; else their taste must be exceedingly bad. Moreover, by the process of self-identification they have become assimilated to the subject of their research and to attack it is to attack them. To question its stature is to wound them.

Yes, the Paragon Complex is understandable. But it is also dangerous. It can lead to unscholarly contumacy, to parochialism, and to sheer bad taste.

I recall the matter of Thomas Wolfe. The thesis writer smiled upon me with pitying superiority when I faltered out names like Dostoevski, Stendhal, Tolstoy, Bolzac.....in comparison with Wolfe, these writers were callow, superficial, and trivial. The secret of the universe had been posed and solved by one man and one man only—Wolfe. To doubt this was to doubt the sensitivity of the graduate student who had spent four months reading Wolfe (and no time reading the European novelists just named). To question the supreme importance of Wolfe was to affront the judgment and inner life of the student himself.

I suggest that young scholars should be prepared to consider that time is well spent in the study of men and women, works and ideas, epochs and trends which are interesting in themselves, even though unequal in merit with the noblest achievements of the past. I suggest a sense of humor—i.e., a sense of proportion—about what one does. We can like faulty people; we can love undistinguished people, and we do them no service by pretending that they are other than they are. A plain girl has her beauty too.

To categorize writers is human enough, just as to identify ourselves with the reputation of those we admire is normal. Abnormality comes, as the Greeks well knew, with fanaticism. The fanatic is humorless, and he is certain. Lord, how he is certain! Antipodal from the fanatic, the scholar is endowed with doubt, especially with doubt about his judgment and taste. He proposes to grow. The scholar's likes and dislikes alter as he lives, reads, and learns.

The true scholar is little inclined to the ipse dixit, the fiat, and the unremitting superlative. To the Paragon Complex he opposes zest and modesty.

William D. Jacobs
The Univ. of New Mexico

The American Book Publishers Council, Inc., has prepared six television films in a series called "Writers of Today," presenting interviews with Robert Penn Warren, Arthur Miller, Marchette Chute, Langston Hughes, W. H. Auden, Archibald MacLeish, and Fran O'Connor.

The Council would like to find out whether this material would be useful for classroom instruction on the college level, and to that end suggests showings of some of the films at regional CEA meetings so that college teachers can evaluate them. Requests for information should be directed to the Educational Television and Radio Center, 1610 Washtenaw Ave., Ann Arbor, Mich.

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(*Continued from page* 1)

The Structural Approach

and idioms structure within the system.

3. The school must provide a crossover from the child's command of speech and auding patterns to reading and writing (including spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical details) to demonstrate and give competence in the two different systems of communication.

4. The school must lift to awareness the structural patterns of logic, rhetoric, form (e. g., stanzas and meters), image, music, etc. in discourse.

5. The school must show that the language system can be the basis of literary art.

As college teachers we receive our students after they have had twelve years of school study of language and altogether some seventeen years of experience in speaking the language. Their speech habits are pretty thoroughly fixed; each student has control over his own system, and he may or may not have an adequate comprehension of the system. He may or may not have an awareness of the extent to which his system agrees with or disagrees with the structuring of the systems called standard speech and standard writing.

The usual college program assumes that the student has a large degree of knowledge and of competence in spoken and written language. Therefore, the college instructor, with the aid of a handbook and / or workbook, sets about correcting details in the student's habit patterns. This procedure works well with students who have a zest for mastering language details and who can — and will — substitute the new patterns for the old.

This procedure, however, demonstrably succeeds poorly with the majority of students who view the school exercise as tangential to, rather than central in, their language use. That is, those students who never see the systematic operation of language are as incapable of inserting the new fact into its proper place as is a person unfamiliar with an electric generator in replacing worn-down old brushes with new ones.

A similar — but even less fruitful — college exercise spends student time in the study of isolated instances of divided usage. Do not misunderstand me. The study of language must involve a concern with usage as one of the means of sharpening the student's capacity to employ the principles of effectiveness, accuracy, variety, and appropriateness of verbal expression. But such study must be carried on in the context of the structuring of the language as a code and as an art.

The 600,000 entries in the fullest unabridged dictionary are capable of infinite variety, but usage study tends to deal (in glossaries) with a few expressions as unique forms rather than as elements in systematic mannerisms. There is no one way of saying anything; an amazing number of substitutions is possible within the regular patterns. These substitutions are of several kinds.

First is synonymous vocabulary as in:

The annual production provides adequate commodities.

The yearly output gives enough things.

A thing of beauty is a constant joy.

A thing of beauty is a joy forever.

Second is substitution in the verb, sometimes to denote aspect, as in:

The man was arrested.

The man got arrested.

The man used to get arrested.

The man kept on getting arrested.

Third, one patterning unit substitutes for another, as in:

The body and the soul are equal. The one **I am** must not abuse itself to the other **I am.** (A clause replaces a noun.)

Over the fence is out of the game. (Prepositional phrases replace nouns.)

He is always I-told-you-so-ing me. (A clause operates as a verb.)

This kind of substitution provides some of the beautiful variety which makes English an instrument of grace and charm as well as of superb utility. When substitutions are viewed as individual items, the value of the particular instance to any one student is small. When it is seen as an example of an operating device involving many similar forms, it can have large significance.

The structuralist sees simplicity within the apparent complexity of the English language. He looks at a prose essay and sees thousands of words, and he knows there are 600,000 entries in the fullest dictionary. He sees paragraphs ranging in size from one word to a thousand or more. He sees in the sentences, however long, a small number of patterns. These sentences group into paragraphs, and he can speak about paragraphs in terms of sentences. He sees that he can deal with words best in their positioning in sentences. Thus the sentence becomes his focal point, and he derives other principles from his observation of the structuring of sentences.

These principles are not numerous. They involve word order, distribution of words into classes, groupings of words, function, modification, inflection, selection of forms, repetition, and substitution. Language bears a close relationship to mathematics (which indeed may have been derived intuitively by early scholars from language), for the operations in the one closely parallel the operations in the other. The scientist seeks an orderly simplicity amid the seeming chaos of multifold phenomena. Structural grammer meets all the tests of scientific procedure.

The English language is a system of structures which pattern regularly and harmoniously. The school's primary responsibility is to lift into awareness in the student's mind the limited number of structures—something less than 800 — and to give him facility in using them. Once he knows how language operates, he will be able to use the instrument to advantage as a code having one form in speech and a quite different form in writing. He can proceed to extend his skill to artistry or at least to an understanding of the difference between competence and artistry. The key by which the treasure house is unlocked is a knowledge of the structures of language.

Harry R. Warfel
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Cultural Nationalism: Some Reconsiderations

I write in reference to "Cultural Nationalism" by Professor Joseph E. Baker of the University of Iowa, published in the December issue of The CEA Critic. Professor Baker opposes an attitude which he states as:: "Let us have less of Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, Wagner, Schubert, and Brahms, for we are Americans, we have fought two wars against the Germans and Austrians, and we licked them."

Professor Baker writes in rebuttal to "Majors and Non-Majors" by Professor Cecil B. Williams of Oklahoma A & M College, published in the October issue of The CEA Critic. As quoted by Professor Baker Professor Williams wrote: "American society does not want so much English literature in college curriculums as we have been trying to keep here. Why should it? Surely by now we are no longer a colonial nation. The United States of America contains about 60 per cent of the English-speaking world, four times the population of England."

The two statements are not the same. Re-reading Professor Williams' article, I find a statement of the fact that the number of English majors has declined in proportion to college enrollment, and an attempt to find a way to support English departmental registrations in literature courses. Professor Williams proposes more attention to the interests of non-majors and more offerings in American literature.

Professor Baker replies by attacking his own misstatement of Professor Williams' attitude as "chauvinistic" and "irrelevant." He is right in so doing, and I agree with him completely. But he is not refuting Professor Williams, because that is not what Professor Williams wrote. The two articles are before me as I write: I find only oblique relationship between them.

Both articles, however represent an issue that is not new. We confess declining registration in our advanced courses, and we know that our Freshman-Sophomore registration is maintained by administrative fiat; where hours of required English have been decreased, registration has declined, classes have been canceled, English teachers have sought new jobs. Some English professors, facing changing conditions and new problems, have done little re-thinking in terms of departmental functions and objectives, the relationship of English departments to institutional responsibilities, the maintenance of higher education in a democratic society.

It s not necessarily too late. There is a considerable body of responsible scholarship which deals with the problem on which Professors Williams and Baker write. Statistics have been compiled, studies have been completed, conclusions have been stated. Professor Williams adds figures from his institution; Professor Baker adds his personal opinion. I should have more respect for this personal opinion if it seemed to bear more relation to the curricular studies I refer to (Cf. College English, The Journal of Higher Education, Bulletin of the Association of American Colleges, CEA Critic, et. al., passim.)

Cultural nationalism is not necessarily American. In my experience it has not been American-literature professors who have demanded that our one required course in literature be limited to the literature of one nation. I doubt, as does Professor Williams, that what Professor Baker calls the widest and most generous comprehension of human life has been exclusively British.

I consider Professor Baker's scholarship sloven, his logic loose, his language florid. In his third paragraph he impugns the principles upon which American-literature professors act. I consider such imputation regrettable. To stigmatize a professor who teaches American literature as one who "sets out to make profit from national pride," is undignified and unworthy. In our eroded age, scholars may no longer be gentlemen; but we should be able to consider curricular problems without personal recrimination.

I question whether Professor Williams' admiration for Chaucer is "smugly" expressed. Granted, tone is often a delicate problem of interpretation; but as I compare the two articles, I find honest humility in the first, not in the second. It was not Professor Williams who wrote: "for example, music only when composed (and played) by properly screened citizens born on this side of the Atlantic since 1900." My friends who teach American literature neither think nor write nor stoop like that.

No professor of American literature that I know makes "political allegiance the test of what we teach." Nor, so far as I know, do any of my colleagues belong to "cells of allegiance" which "would elevate American nationalism into a literary criterion." More important, none, I hope, would use such slurs in referring to his colleagues.

Professor Baker's sarcasm seems misplaced when he tells us that we read English literature "because it is in our own language." Most of the great literature of the world (as Professor Williams says) is now available in our own language.

I disapprove Professor Baker's diatribe. It is marred by ignorance of pertinent facts, deliberate distortion of honest opinion, emotionally colored language, insolent personal references to scholars with whom he disagrees. I hope that consideration of the place of American literature in the American college curriculum will continue with more light and less heat than Professor Baker has contributed.

I would direct some small rays toward illumination of the problem: first, let us admit that much of the opposition to the teaching of American literature has been based upon ignorance. Often, in my experience, what Professor Baker calls "the

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best" has meant "what I studied in graduate school." Many professors of literature in American institutions of higher learning included no courses in American literature in their professional preparation; and unfortunately some of these have sought not to overcome this handicap through continuing study but to defend it through derogation of the subject. I hope to see the day when our graduate schools turn out specialists in British literature who are also equipped to teach American literature to undergraduate students, as specialists in American literature are now equipped with graduate courses in British literature. I would also include world literature, hoping that Professors Williams and Baker would both agree. Too often "the best" has excluded Sophocles and Dante.

Second: before we can teach them anything we have got to get them in our classes. British literature is not the popular elective it once was, and departmental majors are few. The best minds are going into science; the best intentions into social science; students interested in writing choose journalism; Education majors take enough semester hours for teaching fields in English. We have stood pat too long already.

Third: as higher education moves lower on the social pyramid, an increasing proportion of our students comes from non-literary families and non-British backgrounds. Our old-fashioned sophomore survey of the literature of England does not attract large numbers of students to take further courses in our departments. I suggest that a dozen well-chosen books (regardless of chronology or nationality) makes a better course.

Fourth: it should be apparent to all of us that our departments are held in low esteem by students, faculty colleagues, educational administrators, members of appropriations committees in state legislatures. Many students look upon English as a requirement which they must "get off"; many colleagues tolerate us as amiable fuddy-duddies; many deans and presidents have decided to build up other fields and departments because they consider them more important. Even so, I think state legislatures should grant us shorter hours, higher wages, and better working conditions—I do not expect them to.

Not without relevance, we are also aware that the large grants of philanthropy go regularly to promote schools of public health and institutes of citizenship rather than research in Germanic linguistics and British literary history. The Ford fabulanza included a few of us only incidentally The occasional pittance directed toward literature most likely goes to some promising novelist or poet. I am willing to concede the possibility of some justification for the low esteem in which we are so widely held; one of the reasons I have heard suggested is departmental neglect of our national culture.

I invite Professor Baker to come down off his high horse. He cuts no gallant figure up there slashing at straw. The scholar has never worn but awkwardly the armor of arrogance. Come, let us reason together.

"The quality of our culture is at stake," cries Professor Baker, and we all agree. Some of us believe, however, that our best chance of saving it is through a departmental curriculum promoting both American and world literature, with lively interest in literary criticism and creative writing. This, I submit, makes a broader, better foot to put forward then the old-style British boot.

Martin Staples Shockley
North Texas State College

The spring meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication will be held at the Morrison Hotel in Chicago, March 21-23. Program chairman is Robert E. Tuttle, General Motors Institute; Willis C. Jackman, Univ. of Ill., and Carl Lefevre, Chicago Teachers, are local chairmen.

Raven I. McDavid, Jr., of Western Reserve Univ., Cleveland 6, Ohio, is preparing for Alfred Knopf an abridgment of Mencken's **The American Language**, fourth edition and supplements. He would be very grateful for any information about statements of fact in these volumes that are no longer completely accurate.

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West Virginia State College Conference Of English Teachers

The Third Annual West Virginia State College Conference of English Teachers was held at West Virginia State College on Saturday, Nov. 10, 1956. The theme of the Conference, "Better Cooperation between the Teaching of High-School and College English", was developed in general sessions and discussion groups. John C. Gerber of Iowa State University was the main speaker and consultant. He presented a picture of English instruction today in a speech entitled "Simple Rules for Making English a Bore."

In our College today, Dr. Gerber said, there are too few good English majors. The aim of the school should be to make English attractive, stimulating, and challenging. "The teacher's job is teaching human communication."

Dr. Gerber gave four simple rules for making English a bore. (1.) Constantly stress the immediate practicality of English. (2.) Make English seem as much like science as possible. This will result in a disappearance of textbooks from the classrooms. Terms will be changed and clean-cut decisions will be introduced. (3.) Work for uniformity and aim all uniformities at the poor students. This will result in a waste of potentialities in the better students. Rigid schedules will be introduced and intellectual independence will be stifled. (4.) Make no attempt to work with other English teachers in an effort to attack and solve problems. As a result, there will be tremendous repetition and your students will really be bored stiff.

Following the main address, high-school teachers and college teachers exchanged ideas in four sectional meetings-Minimum Essentials of Language Usage; The Nature of Imaginative Literature: Some New Interpretations of Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess"; The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language; and English Communication in Allied Fields. Of special interest were the Workshop on Minimum Essentials of Language Usage and the Seminar on Literature as shown by the number of teachers attending these two sessions.

The Luncheon Session featured an address by Dr. Benjamin Phillips, Assistant Director of Research, Carbide and Carbon Chemicals Company, Charleston, West Virginia, on "What Accomplishments in English Does Industry Expect of Its Workers?"

Approximately two-hundred English teachers and students of English attended the Conference. The Conference was organized in the fall of 1954 by Dr. Lorena E. Kemp, Chairman of the Department of English at W. Va. State College.

On Dec. 3, 1956, the second annual dinner to present the National Mass Media Awards for films, radio, and television was held by the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation in the Sert Room of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City. The CEA, one of the cooperating national organizations that vote on the award winners, was represented by Don Sears and his wife. Other active CEA-ers present were Cyril and Grace Nutley of the Greater New York CEA, representing the Pilot Club International.

Of special interest to students of American culture were two of the awards made by Miss Mary Pickford: one to **Moby Dick** as the film best serving the national interest, and the other to **The Great Locomotive Chase,** dealing with an episode in the Civil War, as the best children's film. The main address of the evening was made by Charles F. Kettering, President of the Edison Foundation, on "The Role of Invention in the Modern World."

Dues

It is proposed by the Board of Directors that inasmuch as (a) Services of the national offices of CEA have increased measurably, (b) Costs of materials, printing and services have steadily increased, (c) The present dues of $3.50 have been unchanged for several years in the face of rising costs, the dues shall be increased by one dollar, to $4.50, effective 1 January 1958.

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